

## Changing While Remaining the Same

by Major General R. Steven Whitcomb, Commanding General, U.S. Army Armor Center

Returning to Fort Knox as the Commander and 39th Chief of Armor is a true honor and privilege for me. I am very excited at rejoining a team of dedicated professionals that serve the most lethal and decisive force in the world. One of the things that I have observed during my career is that units never stay the same, they either get better or they get worse. In an effort to make things better, some people believe that you have to change them. I disagree. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to figure out what needs fixing and what needs to be left alone. While I have only been away from the "Home of Cavalry and Armor" for two years, I am amazed at what has been changed and at what has been left the same.

What has changed, or evolved, is the way training is done here and the training infrastructure. The creation of multi-echelon, multi-grade training by the 16th Cavalry Regiment is ahead of its time. This training, which links captains, lieutenants, and noncommissioned officers in demanding training events called *Gauntlets*, will revolutionize training at the institutional level. Fort Knox has invested heavily and is an Army leader in all three training domains (live, virtual, and constructive). Not surprisingly, the training intensity for everyone who trains at Fort Knox has increased. Our MOUT Zussman Range Complex site is state of the art and, when finished, the entire Wilcox training area will be the best light-to-medium training area in the Army. Further, technology has been incorporated into our classrooms in exciting and innovative ways. For any one who hasn't walked through Skidgel Hall lately, I will tell you that the classroom facilities are far ahead of any university in America.

What has not changed at Fort Knox is the focus on producing competent, confident, and adaptable Armor leaders. From initial entry soldier (IET) training to the pre-command courses, the quality of instruction remains the key. The 1st Armor Training Brigade's focus on

instilling basic soldier skills has led them to develop an outstanding basic marksmanship and physical training program for our Army. The NCO Academy was recently accredited by the Sergeants Major Academy. Our Futures staff continues to provide solid, cutting-edge doctrine; the best equipment and platforms; and superior training systems.

As I assume the responsibilities of Chief of Armor, I want to thank LTG Bell for the improvements that he has made and for the things that he has preserved. He leaves behind a team that can address issues as complex as the Unit of Action for the Future Combat

System or the Interim Cavalry Regiment while never forgetting the purpose for their existence. LTG Bell has left your Branch home postured to lead the Army into transformation and the challenges of the future. This unit has gotten better!

I look forward to running with the baton that he has passed. We remain focused on supporting our field commanders with the best trained soldiers and leaders, the best training facilities, the best doctrine, the best training systems, and our finest intellectual effort for the challenges of tomorrow.

**FORGE THE THUNDERBOLT AND STRIKE FIRST!**

Major General R. Steven Whitcomb assumed his present duties as Commanding General of Fort Knox, Ky., on 3 August 2001. His last assignment was as the Assistant Chief of Staff, C3 (Operations), Republic of Korea/United States (ROK/US) Combined Forces Command, Assistant Chief of Staff, J3 (Operations), U. S. Forces Korea and Deputy Commanding General (Operations), Eighth U.S. Army.

General Whitcomb was commissioned a lieutenant of Infantry upon graduation from the University of Virginia in 1970. Following graduation from the Infantry Officer Basic Course, he served as a rifle platoon leader, weapons platoon leader, and executive officer in Company C, 2d Battalion, 508th Infantry (Airborne), 82d Airborne Division. Branch transferring to Armor, he next served in the Federal Republic of Germany as a Tank Company Commander, Company B, 3d Battalion, 64th Armor and Company Commander and Battalion S1, 2d Battalion, 64th Armor, 3d ID.

Following completion of the Armor Officer Advanced Course, he served as Assistant Professor of Military Science at California State College, where he obtained a Masters of Education degree in Counseling. After attending the Counter Intelligence Officers Course at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., he was the Battalion S3, 524th Military Intelligence Battalion, Republic of Korea. Upon completion of Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., he served as the 2d AD Deputy G2 and as Battalion S3 and XO, 3d Battalion, 67th Armor, 2d AD.

Following assignment as Aide-de-Camp to the Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood, he returned to Fort Leavenworth as a Staff Leader at the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3). He was posted to Germany where he commanded the 2d Battalion, 70th Armor, 1st AD, deploying the battalion to Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He attended the Army War College and was then assigned to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans as the Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, Current Operations.

Major General Whitcomb commanded the 2d Brigade, 24th Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia. He was again assigned to ODCSOPS as the Chief of the Combat Maneuver Division, Force Development. Major General Whitcomb then served as the Executive Officer of the Vice Chief of Staff, Army. He was previously assigned as the Assistant Division Commander, Maneuver for the 1st Cavalry Division, serving with the division in Bosnia. He was then assigned as the Deputy Commanding General, United States Army Armor Center, Fort Knox, Kentucky.